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THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY OF SHĀH ‘ABBĀS I AND THE FIRST PERSIAN EMBASSY TO ENGLAND

By R. W. Ferrier

The visit of the first Persian ambassador to England, Naqd ‘Alī Beg, in 1625–26 revealed not only some of the difficulties experienced by Shāh ‘Abbās I in his European diplomacy, the response of the English Court and the reactions of English merchants, but also the personal situation of members of the mission who had travelled so far. Persia, whose trade had principally reached the markets of Europe through Turkey, increasingly became an objective of European trading in the seventeenth century. During the sixteenth century in the Persian-Ottoman struggle the balance of power lay with the Turks. The accession of Shāh ‘Abbās in 1589, however, marked a definite redressing of the balance in favour of Persia.

Towards this objective Shāh ‘Abbās directed his formidable energies, his administrative talent, his military ability and his diplomatic skill. Ruthless in purpose, he was flexible in method. Observant towards his own religion, he was tolerant of minorities where it suited political expediency. So he fostered and assisted an Armenian community whom he forcibly uprooted from their homesteads around his north-western frontier regions with the Turks and resettled in the suburbs of Iṣfahān or in the silk growing province of Gilān.¹ Likewise he encouraged and protected Christian missionary settlements in Iṣfahān after it became his capital, and welcomed there foreign travellers whom he considered useful. He utilized the services of Armenians, missionaries and travellers in his embassies and trade delegations to Europe. The military campaigns undertaken against the Turks were matched by diplomatic and economic moves designed to deprive the Turks of political support, reduce their revenue from commerce and lessen Persian dependence on their markets, by diverting Persian trade from Turkish-dominated routes to others.² In this Shāh ‘Abbās was ultimately no more successful than the English and Dutch companies trading in Persia were later. The economic advantages of the Levant routes to Europe, coupled with the entrenched position of the Armenians on them and the inability of the European traders to provide a reliable alternative, eventually prevailed over political policy.³ It is in this general context that the first Persian Embassy to England is interesting.

This embassy was not the first to be sent to Europe by Shāh ‘Abbās nor perhaps the most important, but it has significance. Already in 1599 Shāh ‘Abbās had pressed into his service that English knight itinerant, Sir Anthony Sherley. Seeking adventure and a fortune, Sherley had arrived in Persia at an opportune time, sc. immediately after the great Persian successes against the Uzbeks which had virtually stabilized the north-eastern frontier of Persia.⁴ Plausible, though untrustworthy, he was dispatched as the Shāh’s ambassador to Europe, travelling through Russia, accompanied by a Persian ambassador, Ḥusain ‘Alī Beg, and charged with creating an alliance of the European powers and Persia against the Turks.⁵ Shāh ‘Abbās gave Sherley full commission to treat with the European

¹ On the hardships suffered by the Armenians in these resettlements, see M. F. Brosset, *Collection d'Histoires Arméniens* (St. Petersburg 1876), pp. 286–348.

² “Bursa’s development stemmed primarily from the Iranian silk trade”, thus Halil Inalcik, “The Ottoman Economic Mind and Aspects of the Ottoman Economy”, in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. M. A. Cook (London 1970), p. 210. On the importance of Bursa and the silk industry and the late sixteenth century monetary crisis in Turkey respectively, see Halil Inalcik, “Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* III (1960), pp. 131–47 and “The Economic

Situation of Turkey”, *Belleten* XV (1951), pp. 685–90.

³ On the trade of the East India Company’s Agency in Persia, see R. W. Ferrier, “The Armenians and the East Company in Persia”, *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, No. 1 (1973), pp. 38–62.

⁴ E. Denison Ross, *Sir Anthony Sherley and His Persian Adventure* (London 1933); Boies Penrose, *The Sherleian Odyssey* (Taunton 1938); and D. W. Davies, *Elizabethans Errant* (New York 1967).

⁵ Ulugh Beg, a Persian member of the embassy wrote an account of his experiences, see G. Le Strange, ed., *Don Juan of Persia a Shiah Catholic 1560–1604* (London 1926).

rulers, remarking that his coming had removed "the vaile that was between us and you" and that "we have eaten together of one dysh, and drinke of one cup like two Breethren"⁶. However antagonistic Queen Elizabeth may have been towards this truant confidant of her fallen favourite the Earl of Essex, James VI of Scotland (later James I of England) displayed a respect and friendship towards the Sherley family which was as marked in the first Stuarts as it was lacking in the last of the Tudors. In his letter to Shāh 'Abbās, James referred to Sherley "ut pote hominem omnis generis armorum, et politicae rationis peritissimum, in quo minus valent verba quam fides, manus quam animus, utrisque tamen insignibus praeclarus"⁷.

Sherley's departure was not preceded by the unanimity of the Persian court on the desirability of such an alliance, much less agreement on the appointment of Sherley or indeed of Ḥusain 'Alī Beg, who was a last-minute choice. Haydar Beg and Bastān Āghā were opposed to the venture, whilst 'Alī-verdī Khān and Ṭahmāsp Qūlī Beg were favourable.⁸ Shāh 'Abbās, however, was determined to enlist the aid of the Christian powers against the Turks and to offer them favourable trading privileges and security.⁹ It is unnecessary here to follow the fatal embassy and the sequence of disasters to it, arising from misunderstandings and mutual antipathies; it finally collapsed in Rome, where Sherley left in an outburst of recrimination and physical violence against the Persian ambassador and of disagreement over his status and credentials.¹⁰ Shāh 'Abbās was not pleased, according to Robert Sherley, Sir Anthony's brother, whom he had left behind in Persia; Robert wrote to him, "it is seven yeares since he sentt you into cristendum, he knowes not wheare [you] are, nor what you have dun in his seruise, nor the reason why you retorne not untom him."¹¹ Ḥusain 'Alī Beg took this now exclusively Persian embassy on to Spain, probably early in June 1601, where it was further weakened by the conversions of three of his principal members, Byngad Beg, 'Alī Qūlī Beg and Ulugh Beg, before returning early in 1603 with scant success to Persia. The only positive result was that the Emperor Rudolf sent an embassy in the summer of 1602 to Persia.¹² It reached Gīlān in a depleted condition just over a year later, where it was welcomed by Robert Sherley. To this, Shāh 'Abbās further responded by sending Zainal Khān Shāmlū to Prague in July 1604, where he was joined by another Persian, Mahdī Qūlī Beg, in December of the same year. Nothing really positive emerged from these exchanges, for the Imperial Court was at that time beset by internal troubles, and in no position to take any appropriate measures against the Turks. Indeed, the Archduke Matthias made peace with the Turks, to the annoyance of Shāh 'Abbās, in November 1606.

Shāh 'Abbās then tended to concentrate more on enlisting the support of the maritime powers, Venice, Portugal, Spain,¹³ and later England and Holland. Relations between Venice and Persia had existed at a much earlier period,¹⁴ whilst those between Portugal and Persia dated from the time of Alfonso d'Albuquerque's first visit to Hormuz in 1507.¹⁵ The first to arrive in Venice was Angelo

⁶ Ross, op. cit., pp. 95-6.

⁷ "As a man most skilled both in all varieties of arms and political wisdom: a man with whom words count less than faith, hand than spirit, yet eminent in both distinctions", from Penrose, op. cit., pp. 250-1; the original is in the Advocates Library, Edinburgh.

⁸ The controversy in the Persian court is recounted in Sir Anthony Sherley, *His Relation of his Travels into Persia* (London 1613), pp. 82-120.

⁹ (*C*)alendar (*S*)tate (*P*)apers, Colonial East Indies, 2, 1513-1616, No. 261, The Commandment of Shāh 'Abbās, great Sophy of Persia.

¹⁰ Husain 'Alī Beg in Prague and Rome did all he could to insinuate to the Venetians in particular the inferior standing of Sherley: "This Englishman, who is with him, is in fact in the service of the Persian, but is not an ambassador . . . but while on the journey and being master of the language, he had usurped the rank of principal Ambassador . . ." *C.S.P. Venice*, 9, 1592-1603, No. 940, Venetian ambassador to Germany to the Doge and Senate, Dec. 25th 1600.

¹¹ *C.S.P., East Indies*, No. 353, Qazvin, Sept. 10th 1606.

¹² "The Emperor had replied favourably to the Shah's propositions on 11th December 1600 and asked that the Shah would

permit all Christians not only to trade, but to enjoy liberty of conscience", Penrose op. cit., p. 100. On the embassy, *Iter Persicum ou description du voyage en Perse entreprise en 1602 par Etienne Kakasch Zalonkemeny*, . . . traduction publiée et annotée par Ch. Schefer (Paris 1877).

¹³ The Spanish and Portuguese monarchies were united in 1581 under Philip II till their separation in 1640, when the Portuguese monarchy was restored by John IV.

¹⁴ Barbaro, Josefo, and Contarini Ambrogio, *Travels to Tana and Persia, a Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia, in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, tr. and ed. Charles Grey, Hakluyt Society, 1st ser. No. 19 (London 1873); Guglielmo Berchet, *La Repubblica de Venezia e la Persia* (Torino 1865).

¹⁵ Alfonso Albuquerque, *The Commentaries of the Great*, tr. and ed. by Walter de Gray Birch, Hakluyt Society, 1st ser. no. 53 (London 1873), pp. 101-92; Ronald Bishop Smith, *The First Age of the Portuguese Embassies, Navigations and Peregrinations in Persia, 1507-1524* (Bethesda, Maryland 1970). A recent admirable survey of Portuguese-Persian relations in general, and the embassy of Luis Pereira de Lacerda in particular, is Robert Gulbenkian, *L'Ambassade en Perse de Luis Pereira de Lacerda 1604-1605* (Lisbon 1972).

Corrai, who had befriended Sir Anthony Sherley there previously and had travelled to Persia with him carrying letters from Shāh 'Abbās. He was received by the Council in 1599, to whom he reported on the intentions of Shāh 'Abbās against the Turks and the forthcoming Sherley embassy. He was followed in 1600 by the Jesuit Francisco da Costa, in company with a Portuguese merchant-adventurer who had trading interests on Hormuz, Diego da Miranda. They were both charged to advance the affairs of Shāh Abbās in Europe. Within a short time another emissary from Persia reached Venice, Assad Beg, a merchant from the Shāh. With the assistance of da Costa and da Miranda, Assad Beg imposed himself upon the gullible Bishop of Pistoia, by whom he was given an introduction to the Pope on the strength of his specious tales of the impending conversion of Shāh 'Abbās and his family and the Shāh's request for prelates.¹⁶ On being denounced before the Council by Angelo Corrai, Assad Beg was forced to leave Venice.¹⁷ His role was taken up by da Costa and da Miranda, resulting in their being dispatched by Clement VIII on the first papal embassy to Shāh 'Abbas in February 1601. They arrived in Iṣfahān in November 1602, but their mission was a failure because of their acrimonious quarrelling and behaviour, and because of the jealousy and intrigue of the Augustinian missionaries who had just established themselves in Iṣfahān under royal favour.¹⁸

Other missions to Venice included ones in 1603; in 1605, led by Fath 'Alī Beg; in 1610 with the Armenian Khwāja Ṣaffār; and in 1613 with Alredin and Khwāja Sassuar. This last promised "assicurando che i veneti mercanti sarebbero accolti con ogni favore nella Persia, ne mai molestati da alcuno o danneggiati, per quanto importa un minimo capello della testa."¹⁹ Sassuar returned in 1621 where he was assured "molto importando alla repubblica l'amicizia de suo re, ed il facile commercio colla Persia."²⁰ Unfortunately, the economic power of Venice was ebbing and her industry was declining in the face of English and Dutch competition, loss of markets and the burden of confronting the Turks; hence little assistance could be expected by Persia from Venice, the most exposed and vulnerable of all the European powers to the Turks.

Meanwhile, missionaries were establishing themselves in Persia, starting with the Augustinians in 1602.²¹ The Carmelites established themselves in 1607,²² and the Capuchins in 1630.²³ Shāh 'Abbās frequently availed himself of their services, for the most part with scant success.

Embassies to Spain had not started auspiciously with the ill-starred Sherley-Ḥusain 'Alī Beg mission, deserted by Sherley in Rome. Nevertheless, the issues between the two countries were important enough, even before Ḥusain 'Alī Beg's return, for Philip III firstly to send letters to Persia in 1601 and, secondly to appoint in 1602 the noble Luis Pereira de Lacerda as his ambassador to Persia, where he arrived in October 1604 with the Augustinian friars, Belchior dos Anjos and Guilherme de Santo Agostinho. Apart from encouraging Shāh 'Abbās against the Turks, Philip III hoped to recover Bahrain, which had recently ceded to the Persians, and to consolidate the position of the Augustinians, particularly their position *vis à vis* the Armenians, whom they expected to bring under papal authority. In his turn Shāh 'Abbās dispatched the indefatigable Diego da Miranda together with Antonio Gouveia, who had returned with Ḥusain 'Alī Beg, and Baṣtām Qūlī Beg, who however died on the way to Spain in October 1603. Another ambassador was appointed in 1605, Pakize Qūlī Beg, in answer to the embassy of Lacerda, who appeared in Spain again in 1614. Father Belchior dos Anjos returned to Persia as "resident" ambassador for the period 1608-14. Antonio Gouveia combined his spiritual responsibilities with secular affairs during this time, fostering the Augustinian interests at Iṣfahān as well as advancing the cause of the Portuguese authorities from Goa.

The main purpose of this diplomatic activity was simple. The Persians continued to press for an offensive alliance against the Turks and the diversion of trade from Turkish-controlled routes. The Spanish-Portuguese policy was based on keeping the Persians and Turks at war without committing themselves, promoting missionary activity both for the greater glory of God and their own political

¹⁶ Anon. *Chronicle of the Carmelites* (London 1938), vol. I., pp. 80, 91-2 and A. Gouveia, *Relation des grandes guerres et victoires obtenues par le Roy de Perse Cha Abbas contre les Empereurs de Turquie Mahomet et Achmet son fils* (Rouen 1646), pp. 140-8.

¹⁷ Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

¹⁸ Gulbenkian, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-3.

¹⁹ Berchet, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Gulbenkian, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-40.

²² The *Chronicle of the Carmelites* gives a comprehensive account of the mission in Persia.

²³ See Père Pacifique de Provins, *Relation d'un voyage en Perse* (Paris 1631).

ends, and maintaining their predominant position in the Persian Gulf through their bases on both shores. When, however, during the visit in June 1607 of two Augustinian friars from Goa, Father Dioguo de Santa Anna and Father Bernardo de Azevedo, who had come to discuss with Shāh 'Abbās the submission of the Armenians to papal authority, Shāh 'Abbās learnt of the peace made with the Turks in November 1606, in spite of his own successes, he was bitterly disappointed. It was probably then that he realized that little active support was to be expected from the European powers against the Turks, though lip service continued to be given to the idea; he now realized that ultimately he would have to rely on his own resources to free his country from foreign influence.

In the meantime Shāh 'Abbās maintained his diplomatic activity and partly as a result of the second papal mission—which comprised three Carmelite friars, Paul Simon a Jesu Maria, Juan Theodore a San Eluaro and Vincent a San Francisco, who had left Rome in 1604 and arrived in Gilān in 1607—Robert Sherley was entrusted with an embassy to Europe.²⁴ The Carmelites who were helped by Sherley had the first of three audiences with the Shāh on January 3rd 1608, at which they proposed concerted action against the Turks and more toleration of missionary activity, particularly of their own. It is also likely that Shāh 'Abbās was becoming more impressed with the possibilities of stronger economic sanctions against the Turks. Not only was the Shāh encouraging the recently-settled Armenians to trade on his behalf and to revive the production of silk, but he may well have been influenced by the propositions of, among others, Domenico Stropene. This Venetian merchant, whose family had long been settled in Hormuz,²⁵ was visiting Iṣfahān in mid-1608 at the instigation of the Viceroy of Naples in order to suggest a staple of silk at Hormuz.²⁶ He was also in Venice in 1601.

The Shāh, who had probably become irritated with the failures of his missionary envoys, commended Robert Sherley enthusiastically to the attention of the European courts as one who “understands our state, kingdome and what we desire hath served us many yeares with great loyaltie . . . that you wilbe pleased to doe whatsoever he shall propound unto you . . .”, which was that “the Turcke ought to be assaulted by dys wayes, to the end he might be wholly ruynated, wee of this syde and they of the other . . . Thus we determyne (by God's help) to ruyne him, and to blott out his name, soe shall the Christians and or Confynes be unyted, and as Neighbors growe stronge in freindshippe.”²⁷

The flamboyance and audacity of Sir Anthony Sherley has tended to obscure the modest contribution of Robert Sherley to Persia and the Persian diplomatic cause in Europe.²⁸ Though he failed in his promotion of an anti-Turk alliance at Cracow, Prague, Florence, Rome or Madrid, he nonetheless never lost the respect of those with whom he dealt. He made his greatest effort in Spain, where he arrived late in 1609 and remained till he arrived in England on August 1st 1611. He offered to send all Persian merchandise through Hormuz to Lisbon, provided that Spain would attack the Turks. The Spanish-Portuguese united monarchy was an uneasy alliance, and the Portuguese, resenting their inferior position, co-operated as little as possible throughout their eastern possessions. There was, moreover, an uneasy relationship between state officials and missionaries whose objectives seldom coincided, making concerted action difficult. Philip III, controlling the web of his far-flung empire from the Escorial, was enmeshed in a cumbersome bureaucratic administration which was inadequate for its task. The Spaniards were really more concerned by the menace of Dutch activities and their own strategic position in the East than by the threat of Turkish action against their interests in Europe.

Sherley had married a Circassian princess, Theresa, in 1607, and she travelled with him. His decision to leave Spain after his fruitless mission was prompted by disappointment at his lack of progress, his intention to visit England and the arrival of another Persian mission. This mission had arrived in Lisbon in September 1610, having left Iṣfahān in December 1608, and it reached Madrid in February 1611, a leisurely journey. Like much of the diplomacy of Shāh 'Abbās *à l'imprévue*, this

²⁴ *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. I, pp. 105–55.

²⁵ In 1583 Michael Stropene at Hormuz, who had a brother in Aleppo, falsely accused the English merchants John Newberry and Ralph Fitch of being spies against Spain; they were imprisoned and the object of instructions from Philip II to the authorities on Hormuz; see *The First Englishmen in India*, ed. J. Courtney Locke (London 1931), and Pedro Teixeira, *The Journey of Pedro Teixeira from India to Italy by land, 1604*, tr. and

ed. Wm. F. Sinclair, Hakluyt Society, 2nd Ser. No. 9 (London 1901), pp. xxvi–xxx.

²⁶ Gulbenkian, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.

²⁷ Letter from Shāh 'Abbās to James I from *The Sherley Brothers*, pp. 60–1, quoted in Penrose, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–1.

²⁸ His services to the Persian army have either been too highly exaggerated or too slightly dismissed. See R. M. Savory, “The Sherley Myth”, *Iran* V (1967), 73–81.

mixed embassy (comprising the Augustinian Antonio Gouvea; a merchant, Khwāja Rajabo, who had replaced the noted and well-travelled Armenian merchant, Khwāja Şaffār; and Denghiz Beg Rumlu,²⁹ described as an ambassador but known as a trader, together with a suite of 25 people) was at odds with itself. It set about disgracing Robert Sherley, and Denghiz Beg repudiated him, declaring that he "was not an ambassador and that the Persian letter of credence he carried did not give him that title",³⁰ The letter of credence proposed, apart from exhortations to attack the Turks, the setting-up of a staple of silk at Hormuz, where the agents of the King of Spain could purchase silk, and requested freedom of movement and reciprocal privileges for Persian and Armenian merchants at Goa.³¹ The Persian appropriated to himself some of the 50 bales of best silk which Shāh 'Abbās had given to him to try the markets, and some others he gave as a present to Philip III; this brought the King of Spain's gratitude but the wrath of Shāh 'Abbās who, on Denghiz Beg's return to Persia with presents and a letter from the Spanish king, had him executed. His own conduct was reprehensible and his embassy fruitless, but he undermined Robert Sherley's embassy, which proved an unfortunate experience for Sherley, and an ominous precedent. The Spaniards were unimpressed, but prepared to continue the exchange of embassies.

Cottington, who as ambassador to Spain had followed Sherley's movements closely, thought his proposals merited consideration. Thus Philip III informed Shāh 'Abbās by letter on March 12th 1612 that he was dispatching a Castilian noble, Don Garcias da Silva y Figueroa, to him. This letter was delivered in 1613 by the hapless Antonio Gouveia, newly appointed Bishop of Cyrene for his zealous pains, but now immediately imprisoned by Shāh 'Abbās for his part in the silk affair. The Shāh made every effort to recover his losses and avenge the disgrace he had suffered and late in 1613 he sent Father Belchior dos Anjos to Spain to obtain payment; the latter however returned in 1615 with merely the news that the promised ambassador was on his way. Shāh 'Abbās was very annoyed and behaved menacingly towards those Armenians contemplating conversion, and the Augustinians prudently temporarily absented themselves from Işfahān.

In the meantime, the three sons of Sir Thomas Sherley had achieved considerable notoriety for their several adventures, and had excited contemporary curiosity.³² The third brother, Thomas Sherley, had been involved in an encounter with the Turks from which he emerged after a gruelling series of escapades. Robert Sherley was therefore not completely forgotten. The Sherley family was not without distinguished social connections which were very much enhanced when Henry, Prince of Wales, and Queen Anne consented to act as sponsor and a godmother respectively to Sherley's first son, Henry, who was born in November 1611.³³ James I, slightly diffident about receiving him at first, nevertheless warmed to him after the first audience at Hampton Court on October 1st and subsequently received him often, making him a generous allowance during his stay.

Socially, his visit was successful, but diplomatically and commercially it produced little result. Many of the chief merchants of London who were members of both the Levant and East India Companies were unwilling to jeopardize their trade with Turkey or to divert funds from their interests in the spice trade for a doubtful and hazardous trade to Persia.³⁴ As Sir John Chamberlain wrote to

²⁹ The Carmelites maintained that he was not an ambassador, but only a merchant, *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. I, p. 146, and also pp. 206-8; the Venetian ambassador to Spain claimed to have seen him as a trader in Venice six years previously, *C.S.P. Venice 1610-1613*, 12, No. 87, Venetian ambassador to Spain to Doge and Senate, March 12th 1611. Shāh 'Abbās remained adamant in his attempts to recover his losses on the embezzled silk, for the English Agent in Işfahān, Thomas Barker, reported in April 1618 that the Spanish ambassador, Don Garcia da Silva Figueroa, brought pepper "under color of a present, but offers it to sell, there is a secret Commande Nobodie shall by it, the kinge intendes to take it upon an ould accompt betwene him and the Kinge of Spaine, for silke they cosened him of long since," [*I*]ndia [*O*]ffice [*L*]ibrary, E/H/3/792, Thomas Barker to Sir Thomas Roe, April 28th 1618.

³⁰ Davies, op. cit., p. 253.

³¹ Gouvea, op. cit. pp. 178-86.

³² For example, the play by John Day and others, *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (London 1607). Many contemporary references to the Sherleys are to be found in Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose* (New York 1937).

³³ Penrose, op. cit., p. 185.

³⁴ On October 4th 1612, by petition to the Lords, were delivered The Complaints of the East India and Turkey Merchants: "The silkes of Persia worth £700,000 sterling but the English cannot rallie above £300,000 a year, the rest they must carry in money" and "The goods brought for Persia by the Persian Gulf will cost a half part more than it will by the way by Turkey", [*B*]ritish [*M*]useum, *Lansdowne Mss.* 160, f. 144. For the early history of the East India Company see K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of An Early Joint Stock Company 1600-1640* (London 1965).

Sir Dudley Carleton, on November 13th 1611, "His projects are to little purpose, for the way is long and dangerous, the trade uncertain, and must quite cut off our traffick with the Turk, of which one of the main benefits was sales of English cloth in return for purchases of silk."³⁵ Sir Thomas Roe, subsequently ambassador to the Mughal Court, and later to the Porte, attended meetings at which Sherley set forth his propositions to the merchants. He too was unimpressed, an attitude which he generally maintained in India: though he realized some advantages in the proposed trade.³⁶ At all events, Sherley in his first embassy to England stressed the benefits from trade, the dangers from Spain and the advantages of an understanding with Persia. During this visit Sherley also kept in touch with the Dutch about prospects for their trading to Persia; he was impressed by Dutch progress in the East Indies and its effect upon the Portuguese.³⁷

Sherley and his wife, accompanied by a suite which included his personal servant, Nāzīr Beg, left Gravesend in the East India Company's ship *Expedition* on January 7th 1613. Almost wrecked on the coast of Makrān, he survived attempts to kill him by Baluchis. Later, the Portuguese in India, who always regarded him with suspicion, also tried to kill him at Diu, but he reached the Mughal Court in the summer of 1614, returning to Iṣfahān in March 1615.³⁸ It is perhaps ironical that having had his suggestion for trade turned down in London, he was approached for assistance in opening up trade to Persia by the factors of the East India Company at Surat, who had despatched two representatives, John Crowther and Richard Steel,³⁹ to Iṣfahān to obtain the necessary privileges. This trade had been proposed in 1614 by Thomas Aldworth, who was chief factor at Surat and had been a merchant and Mayor of Bristol prior to arriving in India in 1612.⁴⁰ His main reasons for proposing trade with Persia were firstly, the expectation of good sales of cloth, and then the possibilities of silk purchases, the chance to damage the interests of the Portuguese, and the need to forestall the Dutch.

Sherley gave William Kerridge, another factor, a description of some Persian ports which would be of use in the event of trade being commenced.⁴¹ He had, however, hardly returned to Persia when he was charged by Shāh 'Abbās to lead another embassy to Spain. In these circumstances it was difficult for him to commit himself too openly to the English cause but he substantially facilitated the grant of the necessary firmāns to Crowther and Steel, and his friend William Robbins, a jeweller of linguistic ability, afforded the factors of the East Indian Company both then and later very considerable assistance.⁴² Sir Thomas Roe arrived in India in 1615, and he on the other hand represents Sherley as totally implacable against the English cause; he was, however, apprehensive over the newly-opened trade to Persia.⁴³

One of the significant aspects of this phase of Shāh 'Abbās' diplomacy was the recognition that with his conquest of Lār and the occupation of the Portuguese settlement near Gombroon in 1612, the Persians were in complete control of their mainland, but suffered from the restrictions to and impositions on trade imposed by the Portuguese authorities in Hormuz, through which all trade to Persia was compulsorily routed. Shāh 'Abbās objected to this intolerable affront and loss of customs revenue,

³⁵ *C.S.P. Domestic James I*, 9, 1611-18, vol. LXVII, Nov. 13th 1611.

³⁶ His attitude to the trade of Persia is best followed in Sir Thomas Roe, *The Embassy to the Moghul*, ed. Sir William Foster (London 1926). He was right in that "this trade will not be turned from his ancient course . . . Great waters will keep their own channel." *B.M. Add Mss.* 6115, f.173., and that "whenever the Turke and Persian make peace . . . the Turke will not make any conclusion but with the liberty of the free and ancient entercourse of trade," *I.O. E/3/4/410* Roe to Sir Thomas Smythe, Nov. 27th 1616.

³⁷ "Robert Shirley since his going to Holland, much railed at by the Spaniard," *C.S.P. East Indies*, 2, No. 576, Sir John Digby to Salisbury, Madrid, Aug. 17th 1611. He had an association for trade to Persia discussed with a merchant, Le Faille, which was brought to the attention of the States General in July 1611; see H. Dunlop, *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis der Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië* (S-Gravenhage 1930), pp. LXI-LXII, 1-4.

³⁸ "He plotted and brought about the great calamities which,

after the arrival of the English overtook the Portuguese Possessions in Asia", Antonio Borraro, *Decade XIII*, p. 19 quoted, F. C. Danvers, *Report . . . on the Portuguese Records relating to the East Indies* (London 1892), p. 118.

³⁹ "A Journall of the Journey of Richard Steel and John Crowther", . . . Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, iv, pp. 267-77.

⁴⁰ *I.O. E/3/2/163* Thos. Aldworth and Wm. Biddulph, Surat, to [E]ast [I]ndia [C]ompany, Aug. 19th 1614.

⁴¹ Note of the Ports in Persia observed from Sir Robert Sherley, Ajmir, Oct. 1614, *I.O. E/3/2/175*.

⁴² William Robbins remains a shadowy figure, but one who was held in esteem by the Persians and whose assistance was sought not only by the factors in Persia but also by Sir Thomas Roe. His financial help to the first factors was indispensable, though little appreciated.

⁴³ "Doubtfull of sending yet wher was so small ground of profit", Sir Thomas Roe to Sir Thomas Smythe, Nov. 27th 1616, *I.O. E/3/4/410*.

but, at the same time, faced with the renewal of hostilities with the Turks, he had to act cautiously so as not to be faced with a simultaneous confrontation from opposite directions. Freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf has been an object of Persian foreign policy at various times from the Sasanian period.

After leaving Işfahān on September 30th 1615 and being deliberately delayed in Goa by Portuguese intrigue, Sherley reached Lisbon in mid 1617. He stayed in Spain till Spring 1622, being well entertained but coldly received. His proposition again to negotiate a firm basis for exclusive trade to and from Persia, in which the increasingly prominent Armenian merchants were to participate, was indifferently received. The Spanish Court was not really interested in trade to Persia; it had other eastern interests in the spices in the Moluccas, silk and precious metals in the triangular India-China-Japan commerce, and revenue from its pass-controlled country trade.⁴⁴ It had problems with the Dutch and the English, who were threatening to deprive them of their dominant role in the East Indies. In this respect the importance of Hormuz was crucial, for with Goa and Muscat it controlled the trade between the Persian Gulf and north-west India. The Spaniards were not disposed to see Persia exacerbate these difficulties by occupying their settlements near Gombroon and by taking possession of the islands in the Gulf such as Bahrain. Before Sherley's arrival, Philip III had in 1614 dispatched Don Garcias de Silva y Figueroa with instructions to overawe the Persians and regain the lost territory from them, these instructions marking a hardening in his attitude.⁴⁵ At the same time Philip III determined to oust the English shipping from eastern waters. As a result of victories against the Portuguese fleets off Surat in 1614 and 1615, the English had gained enormously in local prestige at the expense of the Portuguese. Philip III commissioned Ruy Freyre da Andrada to take out a fleet, defeat the English and free the seas of hostile powers.⁴⁶ Figueroa was delayed, mostly by the wilfulness of the Portuguese, and did not reach Işfahān till April 1618 nor could he begin negotiations, which were hindered by the Augustinians, till later. By then Shāh 'Abbās, who had once again worsted the Turks and had received the first group of the East India Company's factors in his country on December 4th 1616, was uncompromising. Increasingly annoyed over the occupation of Hormuz and still smarting over the silk incident, for which he could get no satisfaction, he was keeping the English traders on a short rein and playing upon their antipathy towards the Spaniards.⁴⁷ There were impressive naval victories by the East India Company fleet under Captain Shilling against Ruy Freyre de Andrada in 1621, and these made up in prestige what the factors were lacking in material resources.⁴⁸

The controversial capture of Hormuz in March 1622 by the Persians, with the forced assistance of ships of the East India Company, almost at the same time as Sherley was leaving Madrid and Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa was on his way home, transformed political and economic relations in the area.⁴⁹ The English, who had held a relatively insignificant place in Persian estimation prior to 1622, in spite of their usefulness as a diplomatic counter-weight to the Portuguese; and the Dutch, who established a Persian factory under Huybert Visnich in 1623, became the twin objects of Persian attentions.⁵⁰ The English Company enjoyed special customs privileges and a half share in the revenues

⁴⁴ For an excellent survey, see M. A. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago, 1500-1630* (The Hague 1962) and C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825* (London 1969).

⁴⁵ On this embassy, see Don Garcias da Silva y Figueroa, *L'Ambassade en Perse*, tr. A. Wicqfort (Paris 1667).

⁴⁶ Instructions of Philip III to de Andrada: "For some years past foreign European ships have entered the Strait of Ormuz with the design of opening up trading and commercial relations with Persia, albeit that the real right of the conquest, navigation and commerce of those regions belongs to one alone", *Commentaries of Ruy Freyre de Andrada* tr. and ed. C. R. Boxer (London 1930), pp. 211-14.

⁴⁷ "Sometymes he would secretly whisper unto us that he had a resolution to take Ormuz from the Kinge of Spayne and deliver it unto the English nation", *I.O. E/3/9/315*, Işfahān to E.I. Co., Oct. 16th 1619.

⁴⁸ It is insufficiently realized how slender were the means at the disposal of the first factors and how poor a figure they cut at the

Persian Court in the earliest days: "Wee are masters of neyther meanes nor money to by us bread, neyther have wee Credit in the Least", *I.O. E/3/6/700* Factors, Mogustan, to E.I. Co. Nov. 30th 1618. They were also largely dependent on the Shāh's Treasurer, Lālā Beg, for their dealings.

⁴⁹ Thomas Rastell, Chief Factor at Surat, condemned it in 1622 as an action "contrary to all order, and to the greate dishonour of our nation amongst Christians", *B.M. Egerton Mss. 2086 f. 84*. Sir Arnold Wilson, *The Persian Gulf* (London 1931), p. 149, is also critical: "The participation of the English in the attack upon Hormuz was clearly without diplomatic justification". However, President Fursland at Batavia was enthusiastic: "Your worships may reckon that you have gotten the key of all India, which will be a bridle to our faithless neighbours, the Dutch, and keep all Moors in awe of us," *I.O. E/3/10/1076* Fursland, Batavia to E.I. Co., Aug. 17th 1622.

⁵⁰ Dunlop, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-23.

of Bandar 'Abbās in return for their assistance over Hormuz.⁵¹ The Dutch were favoured with extensive trading favours, especially as they were the main suppliers of spices and contracted to purchase large quantities of silk.

Hence as Sherley made his way through Rome, Venice and the Netherlands to England on his second embassy in December 1623, the situation in Persia had changed radically in favour of the Persians who, to add to their glory, had captured Qandahār in 1622. Thus peace reigned momentarily on all their frontiers, though trouble was threatening from the direction of Baghdad. Persia was strong not only militarily and politically, but also commercially. Due to the activities of Armenian merchants, a regular trading network was being established connecting Persia with India and beyond, with Venice and other Italian ports, with Poland, with France at the port of Marseilles, and with Holland at Amsterdam as well as tentatively with Russia. The East India Company too was now committed to trading with Persia, in which it had a privileged position, as much for the increase of trade as for preventing the Dutch, with whom they were generally engaged in bitter competition and an occasional bloody encounter in the East Indies, from usurping their place.

Sir Robert Sherley was received in audience by James I at Newmarket on January 28th 1624. James, who had a personal interest in the silk trade, continued to befriend Sherley and support his proposals against the opposition of the merchants connected with the East India and Levant Companies.⁵² At a time when plans were maturing for a plan to marry Charles, Prince of Wales, to the Infanta of Spain, the involvement of the East India Company in the capture of Hormuz was however viewed with some royal disfavour. The Duke of Buckingham, then Lord High Admiral and current royal favourite, seeing an opportunity to blackmail the Company for acting *ultra vires*, required £10,000 to smooth out the position, and neither James I, nor Charles I, who succeeded to the throne on March 27th 1625, would settle for less. This was both financially and politically embarrassing for the Company, and it did not dispose them to willing compliance towards royal requests that Sherley's suggestions be favourably received. Towards the end of the year, on December 7th 1624, James I wrote from Newmarket to the merchants that "the business of Persia" is "a matter of greate advantage to the Trade of this our Kingdome" and that "Our pleasure is that you take into your serious consideration and care both the furtherance and manner of settleing of it, as may bee best for the weale of our Kingdome."⁵³

Taking advantage of the relative freedom of navigation now possible in the Persian Gulf after the capture of Hormuz, Sherley made two propositions on behalf of Shāh 'Abbās. Firstly, in order to protect shipping in the Gulf, for the defence of which the Persians lacked the means, he suggested that "ther may be made and carried Gallies in every Shipp one, reddye to be ioyned together at there arryvall in the Pertian Gulfe, at such reasonable rates as they may be afforded by any other State." In consideration of the supply of this prefabricated fleet, Shāh 'Abbās promised the "Assistance of 20ty or 25 Thousand Men armed and paid, at his owne proper charge for your Maties Service" in those parts. Secondly, Shāh 'Abbās was still anxious to divert trade from the Turks, to lessen their profit from it and to improve the opportunities and conditions for Persian merchants. He was "desirous to remove the Trade from hence, and to plant it in some other place, whether he ys better pleased soe great a Benyfitt should passe." To this end Shāh 'Abbās hoped that as "the Englishe are restrayned from carring any great quantity of Bullion out of your Maties Kingdomes for the obteyning of soe riche a Trade as the takinge of soe great a Quantitie of rawe and wrought silkes, drucks, and other rich Commodities, as are to be had in the Pertian Kingdome . . . that your Matie wilbe pleased that his [Shāh 'Abbās] Subiects may passe ther goods in such Englishe Shippinge as goes ordynarily thether, And which your Merchants are not able to lade themselves, paying such ffraytage as Merchants, with Merchants, may agree uppon."⁵⁴ This trade was to be permitted subject to the usual provisions over customs and freightage, the free carriage of bullion and unrestricted entry and exit for merchants.

⁵¹ A text of the Agreement over Hormuz in *The English Factories in India*, ed. W. M. Foster and Charles Fawcett, 7 vols. (Oxford 1906–55), 1622–24, pp. 13–16, (*I.O.G./29/1*).

⁵² Court Minutes of the East India Company, I.O.B/9 p. 271,

Dec. 21st 1624.

⁵³ [P]ublic [R]ecord [O]ffice, *SP.102/40 pt. 1*.

⁵⁴ *P.R.O. SP. 102/40 pt. 1*.

It was an interesting and shrewd approach aimed at overcoming the inadequacies of Persian shipping and at opening up new and unrestricted markets for Persian merchants by using the recently-opened sea routes. At the same time, it offered a means of overcoming the chronic shortage of ready money that afflicted English overseas trade in the early part of the seventeenth century. Indeed, one of the early advantages of the Persian trade was the belief that it could be pursued without much export of coin, a hope that proved illusory once the Dutch stepped in to supply spices, over which they were to exercise a virtual monopoly in Persia.⁵⁵ It also offered the possibility of the full employment of shipping, which was in the national interest; but it had little to offer the East India Company except an intensification of competition. Sherley also suggested bringing the "sole Trade of raw Silke into this kingdome out of Persia", but having left Persia in 1615, sc. almost a decade previously, he was probably unaware of the great progress made by the Armenians in extending their hold over this trade along the Levant routes.⁵⁶ Shāh 'Abbās might control the supply of silk, but he did not dominate its disposal.⁵⁷ Most merchants were unconvinced by the arguments of Sherley. Not only was it unlikely that the Persian king would extend the necessary credit to cover the time taken by the long voyages when ready money was at hand more easily, but other nations would not passively accept a silk staple being set up in England.⁵⁸ There was the danger to goods and factors in Turkey if the Turks retaliated and there was the greatest doubt "whether the proffitt of the new Trade will countervale the losse of the ould which we now manage in ample manner with our native Comodities, as Clothes, Kersies, Tynn, Bayes. . . . It was not a new proiecte, but ould warre put into another mould." As for the Persian merchants, it was unlikely that changing their markets would be ultimately to their advantage. Moreover, the merchants argued, silk was grown elsewhere than in Persia, and they maintained that there was not a sufficiently complementary trade from England to balance the account without an unacceptable export of bullion. Concerning the galleys, the freightage charge would be so great that it was not a feasible proposition.⁵⁹

In short, in spite of royal advocacy,⁶⁰ the backing of some Lords and the support of a few merchants, Sherley made little real progress. The East India Company had now settled factories in Bandar 'Abbās, Shīrāz and Iṣfahān, which were managed by an Agent and his council, and they had obtained the requisite privileges for trading, which had been increased after the capture of Hormuz; so even if they had needed assistance earlier, they had no need of it now. Hence "wether Embassador or not, it concernes not the Company who have noe need of Sir Robert Sherley's helpe, neither desire to have anythinge to doe with him."⁶¹ This remained the Company's attitude for the rest of his stay in England.

Sherley, finding the Company "backward to give mee accomodacon" for his return trip, petitioned the King for royal assistance.⁶² Before any decision was taken, the whole situation was transformed by the unexpected arrival from Persia in mid-February 1626 in the *Star* at Portsmouth of Naqđ

⁵⁵ "The greatest Traffick, next Indian Cloth, comes from the Spice Trade; which the Dutch engross, beside Sugar and Copper formerly". John Fryer *A New Account of East-India and Persia in Eight letters being Nine Years Travels begun 1672 and finished 1681* (London 1698), p. 223.

⁵⁶ Persian and Armenian merchants were already trading in Venice but reciprocal arrangements had not been agreed with the Spaniards. In France some Armenians had settled at Marseilles, but there too co-operation was restricted, in spite of Cardinal Richelieu's advocacy, see C. D. Tekeian, "Marseille, la Provence et les Arméniens", *Memoires de l'Institut Historique de Provence* VI (1929), p. 12. In the Netherlands the 1631 Treaty between Persia and the States-General guaranteed reciprocal treatment of merchants. According to Professor Boxer, it was "a remarkable exception to the normal treaty relationships between European and Asian powers", but it remained a dead letter, C. R. Boxer *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London 1965), p. 104.

⁵⁷ "All Silkes made throughout his dominions shall be brought unto his Tresurie," I.O. E/3/7/815 Factors, Iṣfahān to E.I.

Co., Oct. 16th 1619.

⁵⁸ Apart from the Dutch, the French were showing interest in the trade of Persia. "Mr. Secretary then reported the offer of the French Embassador of 2 Millions yearley to ioynewith the English to bringe the Silke of Persia to Marsellis," I.O. B/10 p. 58, May 30th 1625. There was Russian interest, too, with embassies from Moscow in 1618, 1623 and 1626, besides an English proposal for trade with Persia through Russia "proposed by the Emperor to sell unto the English yearely a great quantitie of Persian Silke . . . in money only . . . there was no possibility in us to drive so great a trade with ready money", I.O. 3/10 p. 250, 30th Jan. 1625/6. Della Valle had also suggested it as the best route.

⁵⁹ P.R.O. SP. 102/40. pt. 1.

⁶⁰ James I was prepared to undertake his own trade to Persia, but the project died with his death, I.O. B/9, p. 2, December 15/16th 1624.

⁶¹ I.O. B/10, p. 58, May 30th 1625.

⁶² P.R.O. SP. 102/40. pt. 1.

‘Ali Beg, as Persian ambassador. In his suite was the Persian merchant, Khwāja Shahsuwār, who on two occasions in 1613 and 1621 had been to Venice, and his son Muḥammad.

Little is known of the exact circumstances in which Naqd ‘Ali Beg was appointed, but the suggestion that the Company was responsible is extremely unlikely, for their whole policy was directed towards minimizing their charges, not augmenting them, which the sponsorship of an embassy would have involved. There are five more likely explanations. Firstly, the Turkish campaign against Baghdad from 1623 to 1626 had a disrupting effect on overland trade, for which the sea routes might provide relief.⁶³ Secondly, the arrival and activity of the Dutch who “hath bene there and practised uppon the Natives to gayne both the place and Trade to themselves”,⁶⁴ meant that the Persians were anxious to sustain the interest of the English in staying at a time when they were becoming uninterested, restive and critical of local conditions.⁶⁵ Thirdly, the failure of a French embassy under Louis des Hayes, Baron de Courmenin to arrive in 1626 and to inaugurate diplomatic and commercial relations after earlier promises, together with the opposition experienced by Armenian merchants in Marseilles from 1621 onwards,⁶⁶ made the Persians reluctant to rely on French assistance. Fourthly, the Portuguese, though deprived of Hormuz, had not been forced out of the Persian Gulf, but continued to harry shipping from Muscat and pillage Persian coastal settlements, so that the protection of an English fleet was necessary, particularly if Muscat was to be captured, as was hoped.⁶⁷ Fifthly, Sherley had been away from Persia for a decade and Shāh ‘Abbās may have justifiably been anxious to know just what he was really doing.

For Sherley the arrival of the apparently rival Persian Ambassador was singularly inopportune, if not, disastrous, and reminiscent of the Denghis Beg fiasco ten years previously in Spain. For the East India Company it was diverting at first, then it became onerous, and finally became a series of embarrassments. For the embassy itself, split as it was by quarrels and ill at ease, neither the visit nor the consequences were fortunate. For the English Court, it was perplexing. For Shāh ‘Abbās it was unproductive, if indeed any more positive result was expected beyond keeping alive the interest of the English in Persia; the embassy made little contribution towards this, rather the reverse. The visit of the embassy can be divided into two parts, the first from its arrival in mid-February to the loss of its passage for home in mid-May 1626, and the second from its return to London to its eventual sailing on March 23rd 1627.

As soon as the news of the arrival of Naqd ‘Ali Beg was announced before a Court of Committees of the East India Company on February 8th, “it was thought fitt that some of the Committees should attend his Majesty this day to acquaynte him with the arrivall of the Persian Embassadore.”⁶⁸ The Company obtained His Majesty’s coach with eight horses for the ambassador’s reception at Kingston and his conveyance to London after his journey from Portsmouth. He was transported to London on February 19th with members of the Committee in attendance and the Earl of Warwick, the Master of Ceremonies, and other courtiers accompanying. He was first lodged in the house of Alderman Halliday and then that of the Countess of Warwick which she offered “gratis betwixt this and Our Lady Day next”.⁶⁹ Arrangements were made to look after the ambassador and Mr. Ralph Monson was appointed “to bee Treasurer for this particular business” and £100 was allocated at first, the money to be paid out on the signature of two committee men.⁷⁰

⁶³ “The cause with new factions in Anatolia that many merchants have been impovrished and spoyled of all their goods”, *I.O.E./3/11/1228*, Factors, Iṣfahān to E.I. Co., May 19th–Aug. 1st 1626.

⁶⁴ *I.O.B/9*, p. 71, Aug. 13th 1624.

⁶⁵ In August 1624 they petitioned the Shāh for leave to depart, because amongst other reasons the goods they brought “bee heare little vented not affording so much Profit as maie countervayle their charges and expenses . . . and present monie is not easilie to bee found”, *I.O.E/3/10/1164*, Petition to the Shāh.

⁶⁶ The authorities at Marseilles on July 14th 1623, informing the

King about the dangers of Armenians trading in silk and requesting its prohibition, wrote “si cela leur est toleré, il faut que les Français l’abandonnent du tout,” quoted in Louis Bergasse, *Histoire du Commerce de Marseille*, t. IV De 1599 à 1660 (Paris 1954), p. 65.

⁶⁷ “For longe as they remayne there wee dare not without danger consent our ships should runne about the Coast of Arabia for aney imployment, *I.O.E/3/11/1228*, loc. cit.

⁶⁸ *I.O.B/10*, p. 261, Feb. 8th 1625/6.

⁶⁹ *I.O.B/10*, p. 267, Feb. 15th 1625/26.

⁷⁰ *I.O.B/11*, p. 275, Feb. 17th 1625/26.

Meanwhile, as these preparations for the reception and entertainment of Naqd 'Alī Beg were proceeding, Sir Robert Sherley felt his position and status threatened and this was dramatically confirmed when he went to call on the ambassador himself. He requested the Earl of Cleveland, who was husband to his niece, to assist him to retrieve his letters of appointment, since the Lord Chamberlain had been reluctant to authorize this. The Duke of Buckingham was more pliant and he was able to secure directions for Lord Conway, Secretary of State, to make them available. Armed with these, Sherley paid an announced call on Naqd 'Alī Beg during the morning of the afternoon on which the ambassador was to have his first official royal audience (this having been arranged through the attention of the Company). After preliminary courtesies had been exchanged, with Naqd 'Alī Beg remaining seated, Sherley produced his credentials whereupon the Persian "snatcht his Letters from him, toare them, and gave him a blow on the face with his Fist."⁷¹ After this the merchant's son joined the *mêlée* before order was retored. Naqd 'Alī Beg justified his conduct by his "extreme rage against a Person that had dared to counterfeit the King, his Master's hand". Sherley was "amazed and confounded with his blow and treatment". As a result of this encounter, Charles I remitted the audience to another day, very disconcerted at the accusations and the affront to a person with whom he was closely acquainted and whom he had received as an ambassador of the Shāh of Persia.

The East India Company, though not displeased that Sherley had been slighted, was anxious that the Persian ambassador be properly received in audience by the King. They petitioned accordingly, and the Governor of the Company himself presented it to the King at Whitehall. The King "demaunded what satisfaccon should be given to Sir Robert Sherley for the affronte offred him".⁷² To this the Governor answered "that the Persian did not acknowledge him to be an Ambassadors and would not yeilde to be an Ambassadors and afirmed that if he should have done lesse he should have beene cutt in peeces ioynt by ioynt at his returne unto Persia".⁷³ Finally the King granted an audience to Naqd 'Alī Beg " (as a private Gent. but not as an Ambassadors) " and announced his intention of sending Sherley back to Persia to justify himself.⁷⁴ The audience took place on March 6th 1626 and passed off with little ceremonial and less conversation. Charles I shrewdly turned this favour to his advantage and to the Company's discomfort, for not only was Sherley to be returned to clear his name, with the Company providing his transport and being responsible for clearing his debts of £2000, but he was to be accompanied by Dodmore Cotton as ambassador from the King of Persia.

The Company was in a dilemma for on the one hand it wanted to ensure that Naqd 'Alī Beg had a proper reception as the Shāh's ambassador, in order to ensure the Shāh's cooperation. On the other hand, ill-treatment of Sherley might prejudice their position in Persia, lest he "may infinitely preiudice the Company and endanger both the lives of there servants and there whole estate there". Moreover, opinion was again divided about the advisability of trade to Persia when "divers of the committees at their private meetings doe discourage and deliver there opinions too freely against the Persian trade which doth make things worse then they are".⁷⁵ Nevertheless, William Burt, who had been engaged at £200 a year on February 24th, was considered for the post of agent in Persia, and was duly appointed on March 31st.⁷⁶ The Company regarded it as vital that their own fully-accredited chief representative should be in Persia for the return of the ambassadors, of whose intentions they were plainly suspicious. Important meetings were held with Dodmore Cotton on March 24th and 28th, when he offered his services to the Company. Some believed that Shāh 'Abbās would be impressed with an ambassador and so "it may be profittable for the Company for the better accomadaccon and settling of there affaires". Others considered that the expenditure involved would be costly and unnecessary, that Cotton was "inexperienced in Merchants affaires", that there were "Intimates and familiarities betweene him and Sir Robert Sherley", and that it should be remembered that he "above a yeare since offered to Mr. Bacon, the Companies late secretary . . . £100 to be a meanes for him to goe ambassador for Persia". It was decided that the Company had "noe cause to imploy him or

⁷¹ Sir J. Finett, *Finetti Philoxenis, som choice observations of Sir John Finett Knight* (London 1656), p. 175, quoted in Penrose, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁷² *I.O.B/19*, p. 297, March 3rd 1625/26.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *I.O.B/10*, p. 315, March 15th 1625/26.

⁷⁶ "An able and sufficient man . . . given very large and ample authoritie to negotiate and manage there affaires with the King of Persia", *I.O.B/9*, p. 364.

make use of his services". Cotton, who was obviously disappointed and probably had been led to expect a different decision, "pressed the Court more seriously to consider what he had propounded and not to stand upon soe small a charge".⁷⁷ On March 28th he repeated his request but his earlier attempt to bribe the secretary being revealed, "it is like the Company shall be noe further troubled". Indeed, as a result of the disclosures and rejection of his services, Cotton became less enthusiastic over his impending journey for "soe long as he had hope to be employed by the Companie into Persia, as an ambassador, he had stomach to the journey, but being rejected he is now not soe forward to undertake soe long and tedious a voyage".⁷⁸

The Company decided to minimize their expenditure as far as possible and to ensure that neither Sherley nor Cotton had any opportunity of harming their interests in Persia. On March 28th the Governor informed a Court of Committees that as "they were pleased to heare from him the good things, soe with the like patience they would be contented to heare the bad which was of an unavoidable charge which fed upon them by reason of an Ambassadors sent from the King of Persia to his Ma^{tie} . . . but it is hoped that chardge will not continue large by reason that the Surratt fleete is almost ready to depart". He reminded the Court that by "the falling out and affront given by the Ambassadors" to Sherley they had suffered "much trouble and paines by there often and many journeys both to the King and the Lords." Now they had agreed to transport the party back to Persia provided "neither Sir Robert Sherley nor Mr. Cotton should be qualified by His Ma^{tie} as his Ambassadors either heere or there" and that neither of them be permitted to interfere in the Company's affairs in Persia.⁷⁹

Cotton was knighted on 12th April, and in the instructions to him⁸⁰, issued at Whitehall on April 15th 1626, Charles I referred to "so strange an accident upon the arrivall here of a Second Ambassador from Persia, the Lord Nagdi Beg as makes us doutfull how to proceed in any treaty or settlement." Recalling that Naqd 'Alī Beg "upon his arrivall desauowed Sir Robert Sherley and that in soe publique and violent a manner", Cotton was requested by the King to "informe yourself best of the qualitie and authoritie of both ambassayes." Finally, after asking Cotton to clarify the proposals of Sir Robert Sherley and to assure the Persian king of his friendship, Charles I expressed his "will and pleasure" that "you doe not take upon you any title power or imployment of a consull. Nor that you doe anyway intermeddle with the goodes of our Merchants tradeing to Persia but you follow these our instructions without putting any charge trouble or Inconvenience upon our merchants as you will answear the contrary at your perill." The safeguards were satisfactory to the Company, but they were not provided for nothing. In return for them and for the granting of a farewell audience to Naqd 'Alī Beg on 5th April, "when they came together stood looking one upon another, neither as it seemed being prepared for the meeting but at the last they had spoken together,"⁸¹ Charles demanded further financial assistance for Sherley. The Company demurred but learning from Lord Conway that "the Kinge would not suffer the Persian Ambassadors to goe untill Sir Robert Sherley and Mr. Cotton were ready", they had no option but to accept, making a loan available on the security of his jewels.⁸² Charles I, just before they were to depart, tried to prevail with the Company to pay Cotton in Persia, for which they would be reimbursed by "privie seal or any other securitie".⁸³ The Company excused itself by alleging that "they have now recalled there estates out of Persia . . . by which meanes the Company shall be altogether unfurnisht".

By now the fleet which had been delayed by bad weather was ready, and the Company petitioned that it be permitted to sail; Lord Conway agreed, stating that "it was unfitt the Merchants should loose there Voyage for the stay of the Ambassadors."⁸⁴ Shortly afterwards the ambassadors left London, but the fleet, apart from one vessel, the *Expedition*, had left, and Sherley by persuading the Captain, managed to get aboard. The ship was scheduled for Jacatra and the Company was resolved "rather to stay the sending of the said ship then send to Persia."⁸⁵ It was then debated whether "to accomodate them all in soe small a vessel" but the Captain contended that "if the Persians come

⁷⁷ *I.O.B/10*, pp. 327–31, March 24th 1626.

⁷⁸ *I.O.B/10*, p. 334, March 28th 1626.

⁷⁹ *I.O.B/10*, p. 338; 339, March 28th 1626.

⁸⁰ All Souls, Oxford, Coddington Library, *Owen Wynne Mss.* vol. XII, ff. 84–5.

⁸¹ *I.O.B/10*, p. 353, April 5th 1626.

⁸² *I.O.B/10*, p. 358, April 8th 1626.

⁸³ *I.O.B/10*, p. 366, April 14th 1626.

⁸⁴ *I.O.B/10*, p. 367, April 14th 1626.

⁸⁵ *I.O.B/10*, p. 373, April 21st 1626.

aboard it was impossible to accomodate them all ” and that “ noe use can be made of their ordnance ”, and that he at any rate was “ resolved not to hazard his person . . . for there can be no other thinge expected but a destruction of the whole companie ”.⁸⁶ By May 16th, Naqd 'Alī Beg had returned from Dover. By May 12th, the Expedition had left with authority to the Captain to “ keepe on his course directly for Jacatra ”. Sherley and Cotton were finally obliged to disembark before the ship sailed.

Naqd 'Alī Beg himself had been well treated by the Company, in marked contrast to their treatment of Sherley and Cotton. They relieved the ambassador of the necessity of a £10,000 bond for his goods requested by the customs authorities.⁸⁷ They paid for the services of an interpreter, Richard Williams, who later so acted for Sir Dodmore Cotton in Persia, and arranged for him and his letters to be taken to the Lords. Though Charles I at the departure of Naqd 'Alī Beg “ refused to feast or give any present ”⁸⁸ the Company did, offering a standing silver cup weighing 49 oz., his portrait painted by Richard Greenbury, plate and 400 Angells in a golden purse. He left for Gravesend by barge and went to Dover by coach whither he was accompanied by four Committeemen. Naqd 'Alī Beg all this time was apparently satisfied at his reception from the Company. This attitude persisted after his return from Dover when “ being now returned to London, he shewes himselfe very noble, for he is content to beare his owne chardge ”.⁸⁹ He was looked after by Mr. Edward Heynes, who had been secretary to Sir Thomas Roe in India.

Relations, however, between the Ambassador and the merchant, Khwāja Shāhsuwār and his son, Muḥammad, were not smooth, even during the first two months, and gradually gave way to acrimonious disputes which were soon to involve all concerned with Persia. Khwāja Shāhsuwār, who acknowledged to the Company that he had been “ most kindly used and respected by them ”, requested the assistance of the Company in finding “ divers Comodities and toyes ” desired by the Shāh and selling his silk. He reported that “ he hath bynn in many Shoppes and houses and made enquiries after them and findes they were not heere to be had ”, and he declared that if the Company refused “ he will leave his silkes behinde him and runne away ” but if they accepted “ whatsoever they shall please be it cloth, earth or a handfull of ashes ” he would be content. The Company was perplexed and considered “ his brayne was a little crackt ”. Many suggested that the Company pay no attention in case they displease the Shāh, and some questioned “ whether the Marchant hath power without the ambassade to dispose of the Silke ”.⁹⁰ In this respect the merchant promised to put his authority in writing that “ he hath free libertie and power from the King his Ma^{tie} to sell the silkes and that the Ambassade hath nothing to doe with it. . . ” He would do whatsoever the Companie should desire for it was but “ his neck in there halter ”, and he desired “ nothing more than to expresse their loves to himselfe and service to the Kinge his Master ”.⁹¹

Two days later on April 10th, finding that the Company was still unconvinced, he stated that “ the Kinge of Persia had sent him hither as a Marchant, not as an Ambassade and with the Ambassade he would have nothing to doe ”. There is no doubt “ how intemperately and passionately he carried himselfe ” and how much rancour he had towards Naqd 'Alī Beg for if “ he burne the silke or give it away for nothings, the Ambassade shall not be questioned for it ”. He also repeated the old argument that the Shāh “ did much desire the Englishe should have the sole trade of his Silkes for which purpose, he did intende to cutt off the passage to Constantinople ”.⁹² The Company agreed that though they would not buy the silk they would not prevent others so doing.

It soon became obvious why the Merchant was anxious to dispose of his silk so quickly and why he disputed any claim of Naqd 'Alī Beg to it. On May 8th before they all left for Dover, Heynes reported that Naqd 'Alī Beg was demanding 200 tūmāns [£750] for his maintenance from the merchant.⁹³ Two days later the merchant informed the Court of Committees that when the Shāh “ sent this man Ambassade for England [he] gave unto him money sufficient to defray his chardges for two yeares together with Silver Plate and Jewells, and all provisions necessary for such a Voyage, and had given

⁸⁶ *I.O.B/10*, p. 380, April 24th 1626.

⁸⁷ *I.O.B/10*, p. 316, March 15th 1625/26.

⁸⁸ *I.O.B/10*, p. 358, April 8th 1626.

⁸⁹ *I.O.B/10*, p. 427, May 16th 1626.

⁹⁰ *I.O.B/10*, p. 361, April 8th 1626.

⁹¹ *I.O.B/10*, p. 362, April 8th 1626.

⁹² *I.O.B/10*, p. 363, 364.

⁹³ *I.O.B/10*, p. 403, May 8th 1626.

expresse command not to deliver any money to the Ambassadors",⁹⁴ though he had done so at Surat. He remained impervious to Company entreaties for him to take into consideration that the Ambassador "might not live in misery or disgrace, nor perish for want of means" particularly since as a foreign ambassador once he had received his dispatch, "if he shall remain after in England, he must be at his own charge".⁹⁵ After having assured himself that Naqd 'Alī Beg would not be allowed to take his silk by violence from him, he maintained that "the Ambassador should have no money of him, as long as his head was upon his shoulders" and that Naqd 'Alī Beg "had dealt all with him, had disgraced him, had beaten him, had threatened to rip up his belly".⁹⁶ The Company might proclaim its impartiality in the dispute, content "neither to persuade nor dissuade", but the problem vexed them during the enforced stay of the Persian embassy in London during the next eleven months, exacerbating relations on all sides.

So the Company found itself in a highly embarrassing situation when the three ambassadors returned to London. Sherley and Cotton were greatly incensed at their failure to depart. The Company was upset at the unexpected return of Naqd 'Alī Beg, whose visit, it had been hoped, would be short. It was now hoped that their charges would not continue long, as the Surat fleet was almost ready to leave. When it became apparent that he might miss his passage, the Company decided that he should "be lodged in the same house he formerly had and the rent thereof to be paid by the Company for a year if he stay so long but for dyett and furniture, the ambassador was to be at his own charge".⁹⁷ As a result of this extra and unforeseen financial burden, relations between the Ambassador, Naqd 'Alī Beg and the merchant Khwāja Shāhsuwar, which had never been cordial, were aggravated, and the Company was embroiled in their quarrelling. Naqd 'Alī Beg required money for his stay and failing to get any from the merchant, importuned the Company who, reluctant to make an advance, nevertheless hoped to be repaid from the proceeds of the merchant's silk. The latter was unwilling for this to happen and accused the Company of acting against his interests. He complained that "the Company never cared for him but would hang him or cut his throat if they could".⁹⁸

It was unfortunate for the Company to have the ambassador and merchant at loggerheads; it was worse that they both blamed the Company in scurrilous letters which they both wrote to Holland and which greatly perturbed the Company. It was discovered that "the Persian ambassador and Persian merchant how they had wronged the Company by their untrue reports sent into Holland that the Company had seized their silk here for toll and custom". This at a time when Naqd 'Alī Beg was requesting "£300 for his present supplies".⁹⁹ The Company felt that their position in Persia might be endangered as a result of this correspondence and warned their factors accordingly. They also refuted the allegations in letters to Holland written by the Governor, Sir Morris Abbot. There is no doubt that Naqd 'Alī Beg was planning to take the silk over to Holland and that he was to receive permission to sell it there as a private person and that the Persian Ambassador to Holland, Mūsā Beg, was involved in this. One of the interpreters to Mūsā Beg made a visit to England at the beginning of May, doubtless to arrange for the disposal of the silk.¹⁰⁰ Sir Morris Abbot writing to Mūsā Beg refuted the "scandalous report" about the Company, denied that they had any intention of depriving the merchant of his silk and stressed that they had always searched for an understanding between the ambassador and the merchant "so that they might be well served" and tried to advance the affairs of the Persian King in England.¹⁰¹

This incident, apparently insignificant in itself, nevertheless reveals an awareness and appreciation of the parallel embassy to Holland which had been dispatched by Shāh 'Abbās. Led by Mūsā Beg, accompanied and assisted by the Dutch painter and man of affairs Johann Lucassen van Hasselt, it left Persia on February 10th 1625 and arrived in Amsterdam on February 9th 1626; it left for Persia on March 12th 1627, arriving early in 1629 after visiting Batavia. It also contained a merchant and his son. Mūsā Beg, too, had his problems of receptions, of relations with Armenian merchants, and of missing a

⁹⁴ *I.O.B/10*, p. 406, May 10th 1626.

⁹⁵ *I.O.B/10*, p. 407, May 10th 1626.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *I.O.B/10*, p. 372, April 19th 1626.

⁹⁸ *I.O.B/10*, p. 465, June 2nd 1626.

⁹⁹ *I.O.B/10*, p. 483, 484, June 14th 1626.

¹⁰⁰ Dunlop, *op. cit.* pp. 695–6, *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal*, 1624–27, May 23rd and 26th 1626.

¹⁰¹ Dunlop, *op. cit.* pp. 697–8, Sir Morris Abbot and other Committeemen to Mūsā Beg, May 20th 1626.

ship. He too found conditions trying and made little real contribution personally to furthering relations between Holland and Persia additional to those already envisaged. As Dunlop says, "De persoon van Musa Beg was echter verre van bevredigend en zijne zending had weinig resultaat".¹⁰² The Dutch authorities were disappointed at the cost of the embassy to themselves, some 100,000 guilders, upset by Mūsā Beg's behaviour, "syne perticuliere comportementen met drinken, vrouwen . . .", and annoyed at the liberties taken by the ambassador and the merchant over the transport and disposal of goods.¹⁰³ In spite of the attention lavished on him during his stay in Holland and afterwards, he was neither grateful nor useful to the Company later during the Smidt embassy to Persia.¹⁰⁴

There was, nevertheless, no lack of interest in Persian affairs by the Dutch East Indies Company or its representatives in Batavia. Jan Pieterzoon Coen, who travelled back to Batavia with Mūsā Beg, wrote on November 9th 1627 "Godt geve, de Compagnie lange eenen vredigen handel in Persia behouden".¹⁰⁵ He also arranged the Dutch embassy of Jan Smidt, who sailed to Persia accompanied by Mūsā Beg, arriving at Gombroon on February 9th 1629. There were thus a number of similarities between the two embassies to England and Holland, and their results were curiously alike. For Persia, Shāh 'Abbās maintained his policy of cultivating relations with two countervailing powers and playing off the interests of both to his own advantage. A treaty was eventually signed on February 7th 1631 between Persia and the States-General.

Back in England, the month of July 1627 was bedevilled with disputes between the ambassador and the merchant and between the merchant and purchasers of the silk. The ambassador persisted in his endeavours "to have a further supply of money from the Companie", but they felt that "since their last accomadaccon of him with money hee hath much slacked the prosecucon of his designe upon the merchant for his reliefe out of the silke". He was "found so inconstant in his resolucons as wee knowe not what to say of him", and he failed to write the letters to Persia which the Company requested.¹⁰⁶ The merchant, who had made a bad bargain with his silk with two unscrupulous merchants, Mr. Geere and Mr. Darley, thanked the Company for its subsequent assistance.¹⁰⁷ He remained absolutely opposed to making an allowance to the ambassador who, at the end of June, had the silk sealed up, at which the merchant protested. The merchant asked the Company to deliver up the silk to him, and asked them to "keepe an account of what silke belongs to the King of Persia and what to himselfe and likewise to receive the money"; this the Company refused to do, "observing his violent passions and resolute proceedings".¹⁰⁸

Some people advised the Company to take the silk into their possession, but that was not approved, as it might endanger their position in Persia. Meanwhile, Captain Milward, who had bought some of the silk, petitioned that he might get possession of it. The Lords proposed that both the Merchant and Ambassador be present at the weighing and that "Mr. Sheriffe Clitheroe required to bee present to conserve the Kinge's peace and prevent such dangers as otherwise by the violent disposition of these people might happen".¹⁰⁹ This occurred without incident on July 19th, when 94 bales were weighed, but a week later the merchant was protesting that lines about "wett or rotten" silk had been added to the contract without his notice by Alderman Smethwick.¹¹⁰

On August 9th the unfortunate and irascible merchant died, and both Sherley and Cotton, who were never far behind during these contretemps, asked "whether the Court had taken any order for the buriall of the body of the said merchant". The Company referred the matter to the ambassador "to receive directions what to doe heerin", for they had resolved to "neither meddle nor make on the business".¹¹¹ The merchant was buried next day by the churchyard of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate,

¹⁰² Dunlop, op. cit. p. LXXIII.

¹⁰³ There were similar quarrels and accusations over the sale of silk, amounting to 100 bales, for the account of the Shāh, between the ambassador and the merchant, Husain Beg and his son, Muḥammad Taqī, Dunlop op. cit., pp. 205-10 (Letter from the Bewindhebbers, Amsterdam to Huybert Visnich, Isfāhān, Oct. 1st 1626).

¹⁰⁴ "Hy heeft aen onse natie, nochte aen mijn saecke, niet veel gunste beweesen," Dunlop, op. cit., p. 746, Reiservehaal Van

Jan Smidt.

¹⁰⁵ Dunlop, op. cit., p. 218, Coen, Batavia to Bewindhebbers, Amsterdam, Nov. 9th 1627.

¹⁰⁶ *I.O.B/11*, pp. 10, 11, July 6th 1626.

¹⁰⁷ *I.O.B/11*, p. 15, July 10th 1626.

¹⁰⁸ *I.O.B/11*, p. 19, July 10th 1626.

¹⁰⁹ *I.O.B/11*, p. 38, July 17th 1626.

¹¹⁰ *I.O.B/11*, p. 52, July 24th 1626.

¹¹¹ *I.O.B/11*, p. 65, August 9th 1626.

where the Persians intoned his funeral obsequies and performed the appropriate rites. His son Muḥammad prayed by his tomb, but the curiosity of the populace turned his private mourning into a public spectacle. Later, Muḥammad caused a monument to be erected with a Persian inscription which read:

The Grave is made for
HODGES SHAUGHSWARE,
The chiefest Servant of the King of Persia,
For the Space of Twenty Years¹¹²

The death of the merchant, far from cooling the passions of the disputants, merely inflamed them further, for the son, with the support of the Earl of Dorset, took up the cause of his father and sought compliance with the terms of his father's will. The ambassador became very discontented in London, exclaiming that "never ambassador was soe meanly used coming from soe great a prince as he hath beene".¹¹³ Lord Carlisle took up his cause against the troublesome son of the merchant and what he alleged was the fault of the State "for there so great neglect of him", and the denial of his relief from sales of the silk, "one of the greatest barbarities that ever was offered to an Ambassador". At a meeting of the Lords the whole position was considered as to why the Ambassador would not allow the silk of the merchant be disposed of according to his will. He refused to take a decision, "only hee said the goods of his Ma^{tie} the king of Persia can never sinke". He complained bitterly that he was prevented from making "use of his Master's good to supply his necessary and urgent occasions" and threatened that "the King his Master may become possessor of Aleppo and other places in Turkey where our Merchants doe now trade and have there Commerce".¹¹⁴ The Company was apprehensive of the effect these proceedings might have in Persia. Eventually an order was made at Whitehall signed by the Lord Keeper, the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Dorset, the Earl of Bridgwater, Mr. Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller, the Master of the Wards, the Master of the Rolls and the Chancellor of the Duchy, requesting an inventory of the Persian King's goods to be signed by the interested parties which would then be taken into possession of the Company, and the proceeds that remained after the embassy's departure remitted to Persia.¹¹⁵

Muḥammad, who had been present at the meeting of the Lords with Sir Dodmore Cotton, refused to accept the order and invoked the assistance of the Earl of Dorset who "thereupon hath in favour of him given very dishonourable speeches against the ambassador and the Company, saying that they have brought him over hither and that hee is an Imposter and their Ambassador", all this being reminiscent of Sherley's contentions.¹¹⁶ The Company attended another meeting to discuss the question at Whitehall on August 24th and requested the preservation of "the estate of the said merchant's somne from being further wasted and consumed". They claimed that his refractoriness was due to John Martyn his interpreter, "who for his owne ends doth exaspate him against the Ambassador" in order to keep his position and "his wife and two feminine servants who live in the house, and are reported to have been in Bridewell".¹¹⁷ Martyn seems to have been an opportunist, for although he saved the merchant's son from the ambassador on one occasion by going to the Earl of Dorset, "crying murther and complayninge much of the ambassade", he subsequently left his service after being involved in the silk transactions, worked for the ambassador and finally in January 1627 offered his services to the Company which, however, declined them.

In September, Muḥammad adopted a new attitude, for professing his acceptance of the order of August 15th he announced himself "very desirous to Contract himselfe with the Chamber maid of my Lady Cokayne to Whome he offred to make over unto her not only his whole estate but also to be Christened before marriage".¹¹⁸ This intention proved little better than the rest. He resorted once

¹¹² *Select Epitaphs. Collected by W. Toldervy*, vol. I (London, 1755), pp. 104-5. I am grateful to Dr. Laurence Lockhart for this reference and many other kindnesses.

¹¹³ *I.O.B./11*, p. 71, August 15th 1626.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *I.O.B./11*, p. 73, August 15th 1626.

¹¹⁶ *I.O.B./11*, p. 87, August 23rd 1626.

¹¹⁷ *I.O.B./11*, p. 90, August 25th 1626.

¹¹⁸ *I.O.B./11*, p. 121, Sept. 27th 1626.

more to petitioning for the full payment of his silk without any abatement "in regard of wett or rotten silk" and that the "goods which belonged to his deceased father may be forthwith restored to him".¹¹⁹ The Lords referred it to the Lord Treasurer and Secretary Conway. Two days later, there was exhibited to the King the petition against Naqd 'Alī Beg, who being summoned, refused "to goe to the Lords, alledging that these Lordships had nothing to doe with him or the government of his people".¹²⁰ Muḥammad's debts became more pressing; even Martyn demanded a £10 legacy he was due from the Merchant and on October 23rd he was reported to have "forsaken his house in London" and was "now under protection of Sir Robert Sherley at Lyme House".¹²¹

As the time for departure grew closer, the demands for money became more insistent. Hence on December 22nd he was requested to attend the Company, "but he still refused to come unto them under pretence that his person would be stayed upon by the Ambassador which also the Company undertook to secure having appointed him to come in and not at their back gate being far from the sight of the Ambassadors or his servants".¹²² A week later, having apparently received no satisfaction, his case was taken up again by the Earl of Dorset and the Lords ordered the Company to allow him £10 weekly for "all occasions and charges".¹²³ Later, assistance was given to him for buying some cloth and at Sir Dodmore Cotton's entreaty on January 17th 1627, the question of money outstanding in the Company's possession was settled; he also received £5 for his father's gravestone and a disbursement of £40 towards his voyage.¹²⁴

There was relatively little trouble from the Ambassador after August. In November he requested that "in regard that winter is now come in, hee might bee furnished with Curtaines for his windows and hangings for his Chamber".¹²⁵ He asked the Company's assistance in buying certain goods for his return, such as 70 tons of tin. He was given in February £200 towards the defraying of his household expenses.¹²⁶ He was unfortunate in so much that "the lewde housewife whom the late Persian Ambassador kept in his house hath secretly conveyed and carried away divers goods and household stuff", but she did not live long to enjoy her theft.¹²⁷ Naqd 'Alī Beg had obviously enjoyed the favours of more than one lady and it was rumoured that he "doth intend to carry along with him into Persia that lewde strumpett which he hath so long kept in his house".¹²⁸ It was resolved to warn the officers of the ship to look carefully and if he "should attempt any such matter absolutely to oppose and protect against it so to the end they may not also be abused herein by having her conveyed into the Ship by a false Disguise".¹²⁹

On more serious matters, Naqd 'Alī Beg was requested to use his good offices with Shāh 'Abbās to ensure that the Persian silk be delivered to Gombroon, that the share of the customs be paid regularly to the Company's agent in Persia and that "the possession of the castle of Ormuz to be a rendez-vous for the ships of the English to repayre unto upon all occasions" be obtained.¹³⁰ It was also decided in view of Persian requests for assistance and the "Persian Trade being of great consequence" that the factors should "treate with the Persian that if he will have his forces in readiness at the waterside against the arrival of the English fleete, the English are inordered to joyne with the Persians to attempt the surprisall of Muscat if the designe may be achieved in 14 days and be not prejudicial to the Company's returnes from thence to Surratt".¹³¹ Almost a hundred years later, the Persians were asking for French assistance against Muscat.¹³² He was accompanied to Dover by seven committeemen and some member of the Inns of Court.

An accommodation was reached with Sherley, whom the Company was ordered to transport with Cotton. He offered his services to the Company, but these were politely declined. It was quite clearly

¹¹⁹ *I.O.B/II*, p. 143, Oct. 11th 1626.

¹²⁰ *I.O.B/II*, p. 147, Oct. 13th, 1626.

¹²¹ *I.O.B/II*, p. 158, Oct. 23rd 1626.

¹²² *I.O.B/II*, p. 285, Dec. 22nd 1626.

¹²³ *I.O.B/II*, p. 292, Dec. 29th 1626.

¹²⁴ *I.O.B/II*, p. 333, Jan. 17th 1626/27.

¹²⁵ *I.O.B/II*, p. 177, Nov. 10th 1626.

¹²⁶ *I.O.B/II*, p. 424, Feb. 16th 1626/27.

¹²⁷ *I.O.B/II*, p. 470, March 21 1626/27.

¹²⁸ *I.O.B/II*, p. 451, March 2nd 1626/27.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Naqd 'Alī Beg was less fortunate than the Persian

ambassador to France, Riḍā Beg, nearly a hundred years later, who, on his departure from France, did smuggle his mistress on board in a chest despite the clamour of her mother, see M. Herbette *Une ambassade persane sous Louis XIV* (Paris 1907), pp. 226–30.

¹³⁰ *I.O.B/II*, pp. 463–4, 9 March 1626/27.

¹³¹ *I.O.B/II*, p. 454, March 5th 1626/27.

¹³² See L. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge 1958), pp. 458–61, and Herbette, *op. cit.*

established that "Sir Dodmore Cotton should in now sort intermeddle with the Companies servants or goods nor have any power over them", so the Company for its part advised its factors "to use him respectfully as his Majesty's Ambassador by attending and escorting him to Court without charge or prejudice to the Companie . . . hee being sent by the King for some private affaire of his owne and not by the Companie."¹³³ In spite of this, the Company continued its favoured treatment of Naqd 'Alī Beg at the expense of the other two ambassadors, giving him "two butts of Canary for his own mouth", whereas Cotton complained that the others were accommodated in "kennels". Lady Sherley was terrified lest Naqd 'Alī Beg assault her husband again, and Captain Hall was instructed to be on his guard against such an incident.¹³⁴

Two of Naqd 'Alī Beg's servants, Rustam and Elias, decided not to accompany him back to Persia. They were employed at first in the Blackwall shipping yard, having an allowance weekly of labourer's wages.¹³⁵ The work must have been uncongenial for shortly afterwards Rustam "petitioned the Court for a suit of apparell to carry him unto his owne country by the way of Muscovia".¹³⁶ Rustam was obviously a resourceful person, for he is probably the same Rustam mentioned by Olearius in his account of the Holstein Mission as being employed as an interpreter.

The return of the embassy was unfortunate, most of the actors suffering untimely deaths. The unhappy Muḥammad was the first to succumb off Mohelia of "a burning fever". As Herbert describes the desperate heat, "soon after we were becalmed, and the sweat dropped from us no otherwise than if we had been stewed in stoves or hot baths, which put some into calentures; but all grew exceedingly faint, notwithstanding our best provision to abate it".¹³⁷ He was buried at sea and the "Captaine gave his foure Culverin shot at his buriall, his bodie was throwne into the Sea, imbowelled in a spacious Coffin".¹³⁸ The family had come from Nava, a town east of Mt. Demavand, according to Herbert, "in which were about a hundred families". The Cotton embassy, returning to Qazvīn from its audience with Shāh 'Abbās, travelled close to the town and a brother of Muḥammad "hearing of our passing by, came out, accompanied with several of his friends and kindred, to invite us to his house. . . . He was appararellled in a robe of cloth of gold, and upon his head a tulipant of silk, and was gallantly mounted. His mien was good, so was his civillity: prevailing with the Ambassador to go a little out of his way to accept a collation such as the country and small warning could provide, it was with such cheerfulness as gave his Lordship and rest of the company good satisfaction".¹³⁹ It was a curiously chance encounter and perhaps brought comfort to the family of Khwāja Shāhsuwar.

The Ambassador, Naqd 'Alī Beg, fared worse. As Herbert says, "The same day we came to an Anchor in India Nogdibeg the King of Persiaes Ambassador gave up the ghost, having poysoned himselfe willfully in foure dayes feeding only upon Opium. The truth is, he dared not to see his Master, nor plead his defence against his Advisary Sir Robert Sherley, in our Company and thitherward, to purge his honour. I can witsesse that at my being at the King of Persiaes Court (as I shall discourse of on the sequel the King said, it was well he poysoned himselfe, for had he come to Court, his bodie should have beene cut in three hundred and sixtie five pieces; and burnt in the open Mydan, or market place with Dogges turds".¹⁴⁰ Fate, too, was not kind to Sir Robert Sherley, who having been rejected by Shāh 'Abbās, "on the thirteenth of June, he gave an *ultimum vale* to this World"¹⁴¹ at Qazvīn and was followed ten days later by Sir Dodmore Cotton who died from dysentery. By this time, the ageing Shāh 'Abbās was not making any further diplomatic moves. Most of the moves had been inconclusive, with unco-ordinated missions, and there had been little real possibility of any concerted operations against the Turks. However, the furthering of relations between the principal nations of Europe and Persia gradually fostered the trade which contributed much to Ṣafavid prosperity.

¹³³ *I.O.B./II*, p. 454, March 5th 1626/27.

¹³⁴ *I.O.B./II*, p. 472, March 21st–30th 1627.

¹³⁵ *I.O.B./II*, p. 504, April 27th 1627.

¹³⁶ *I.O.B./II*, p. 520, May 9th 1627.

¹³⁷ Thomas Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, abridged and edited by Sir William Foster (London 1928), p. 27.

¹³⁸ Thomas Herbert, *A Description of the Persian Monarchy* . . . (London 1634), p. 26.

¹³⁹ Thomas Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, p. 191.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Herbert, *A Description*, pp. 27–8.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Herbert, *A Description*, p. 124.